Out of the Water Closet

The Evolution of the Flushing Toilet

Purpose/Scope: This single frame exhibit uses advertising covers, post cards, trade cards, a stock certificate, and invoices to trace the development of the flushing toilet from 1880 to the 1960's.

Treatment/Organization: A ~~topical~~ Display exhibit. As much as possible, the organization of the exhibit will be chronological. Notes on the printing used to manufacture the advertising covers and the type of cancelling devices used are included. Every effort will be made to describe the function and flaws of the designs manufacturers made during the evolution of indoor toilets.

Importance: This one device has had a huge impact on our society, allowing the development of very large cities. It allows control over the spread of diseases, contains odors, and conserves/controls clean water supplies. In the late 1800's and early 1900's toilets and indoor plumbing were status symbols of the wealthy.

Knowledge & Research: The exhibitor has been employed in the wastewater field for over 40 years as an operator, laboratory technician, and supervisor. In short, experience has given me extensive knowledge of the designs and evolution of this device. Many companies were local and existed for a brief period before either being sold or going out of business. The use of the internet to research company names has been invaluable.

Challenge: Not surprisingly, images of toilets on advertising covers are very difficult to find, this exhibit represents 20 years of searching, just to form a single frame exhibit! Early indoor toilets were a status symbol and tended to be very expensive, limiting them to the wealthy. Advertising was not sent to the general public, most of these covers contained invoices from plumbers and product suppliers. Later years saw the advertising going from a manufacturer to a distributor, again, not to the general public, severely limiting the quantities that still exist.

References:

"Flushed with Pride" The story of Thomas Crapper, by Wallace Reyburn published by Prentis-Hall 1971

"A collector's guide to U.S. machine cancels, by Russel F. Hanmer published by David G. Phillips Publishing Co 1989

www.plumbingsupply.com/flushingtoilethistory.html 10/20/17

http://sanitaryware.org/history-of-the-first-flushing-toilet/ 10/20/17